

**Senate Committee Hearing****January 9, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee my name is Connie Ewing O'Connor, from Poplar, Montana. I have been designated as the Ewing family representative. I am here to request a piece of highway be named in memory of Robert E. Ewing Jr. At this point I would like acknowledge a couple members of the family that are here today: My mother Mildred Ewing from Helena, my sister Lela Cross from Seattle, WA....

Robert Ewing was known to everyone as Bob. He was an exceptional individual who dedicated his entire life's work to building the highway system in Montana. Bob worked for the Montana Highway Department for nearly 50 years. He was a man of great personal and professional integrity. He was a man I was proud to call my father and my friend.

During the summer of 1947 the Department was building a piece of road in the Big Horn Valley. Bob was introduced to the Department when Dick Larson knocked on the door and asked him to go to work. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1947 Bob was hired by the Montana Highway Department. He began working as a Gravel Inspector; by August of 1947 he had been promoted to Chainman. In 1950 Bob was promoted to Rodman and by 1952 he had been promoted to Instrument Man. He became an Acting Project Engineer in 1955 and was promoted to Project Engineer in 1956.

Initial project assignments were modest in size and included turning two-wheel track roads into graveled grades. Project assignments grew in size and complexity over time. Eventually Bob was responsible for multi-million dollar interstate construction projects.

Bob was the "Resident Engineer" on two inter-state highway projects that won construction awards. His project on Interstate 94 Huntley – Ballantine east of Billings was awarded third place in 1970. His project on Interstate 90 Columbus – Park City was awarded first place in 1971.

Bob and his crew performed the location and field survey work on a section of US 212 near Lame Deer in 1975 that won 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the category "Outstanding Section of New Highway in its Rural Environment in FHWA's annual awards competition. There were 379 entries from 45 states in the contest. He received a letter of congratulations for his contributions to that project.

In 1976 Bob accepted the position as a "Statewide Construction Reviewer."

As a Construction Reviewer his ability to influence the quality of highway construction was expanded. He was able to assist with behind the scene improvements though his ability to discern potential and real construction problems, he was diligent in seeking solutions, and was always willing to share both his knowledge and experience.

He developed many of the manuals used today by the field inspectors. He enjoyed his work and was well regarded by his supervisors, his fellow workers, and by the contractors.

Bob retired in 1990 but continued to work for the MDT on a part time basis. He continued on a part time basis until the final challenge in his life overtook him. He passed away on February 25th 1997 after a struggle with lung cancer.

Bob's accomplishments are impressive enough that most engineers would consider his career a success. His accomplishments are, I believe, even more impressive when you consider that Bob came from humble beginnings. The son of homestead farmers in the Bighorn Valley. He rose thru the ranks of the Highway department without the benefit of a college education. His lack of formal education was more than offset by his love of his craft, his willingness to go the extra mile to make sure the job was done right, a work ethic second to none, and a lifetime of dedication to the DOT and the State of Montana.

Bob was a dedicated family man. He was a loving husband and a caring father. He married our mother on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1950. A marriage that lasted 47 years through the good times and some that were challenging. Bob had a wide variety of project assignments that took him many places across Montana. He believed it was important to have his family with him. He moved his family 37 times though out his nearly 50 years with the Department. Bob had four children, arguably with a little help from our mother. All of his children graduated from college, an accomplishment that both my mother and father can take a full measure of credit for encouraging. Bob's children grew up in home where giving up was not an option, failing was not an option,

and doing anything less than you were able to was not an option. Bob cared for and supported his mother after his father passed away. Bob offered to raise his brothers three children after his brothers untimely death.

Bob was not a flashy guy. Truth to be known, I believe he would be more than a little uncomfortable with all of the attention that is being paid to his career and life here today. Bob was a man who deserves to be honored for all of the reasons presented here today and for countless others that will go unmentioned. Bob Ewing was as fine an example of a public servant as anyone will ever find. Bob Ewing was as fine an example of a Montanan as anyone will ever find. This committee has the opportunity to honor one of its own. I respectfully submit to this committee Senate Bill 29 to establish the Robert E. Ewing Jr. Memorial Highway. No greater honor could be offered to a man so dedicated to building the highway system in Montana.

I would like to close our presentation by thanking the members of this Committee for granting us an opportunity to come before this committee and present this request. Good Day and God Bless.